DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 079 213 SO 006 027

AUTHOR	Kraemer, Alfred J.
TITLE	A Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Improving Intercultural Communication Skills.
INSTITUTION	Human Resources Research Organization, Alexandria, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of the Chief of Research and Development (Army), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Apr 73
NOTE	17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association (New York, March 15-17, 1973)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Activity Learning; Behavior Patterns; Bibliographic Citations; *Communication Skills; Comparative Analysis; Cross Cultural Studies; *Cross Cultural Training; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Differences; *Cultural Education; Cultural Images; Culture Contact; Educational Programs; Human Geography; Social Sciences; Sociocultural Patterns; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS	*International Studies Association

ABSTRACT

Communication between persons of differing cultural backgrounds can be hindered by culturally-conditioned assumptions that they make about each other's cognitions. An exercise was designed to reduce this effect through increased cultural self-awareness. It involves participants in analyzing video recordings of staged "excerpts" from intercultural dialogues that contain subtle manifestations of cultural influence, while noncultural influences are being varied from excerpt to excerpt. In each sequence the cultural influence is a common element gradually brought into focus. (Author)

50

HumRRO

Professional Paper 5-73

HumRRO-PP-5-73

ED 079213

A Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Improving Intercultural Communication Skills

Alfred J. Kraemer

Presented at the
Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association
New York March 1973

HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH ORGANIZATION
300 North Washington Street • Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

$ 006027

April 1973

Prepared for

Office of the Chief of Research and Development
Department of the Army
Washington, D.C. 20310

The Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) is a nonprofit corporation established in 1969 to conduct research in the field of training and education. It is a continuation of The George Washington University Human Resources Research Office. HumRRO's general purpose is to improve human performance, particularly in organizational settings, through behavioral and social science research, development, and consultation. HumRRO's mission in work performed under contract with the Department of the Army is to conduct research in the fields of training, motivation and leadership.

The contents of this paper are not to be construed as an official Department of the Army position, unless so designated by other authorized documents.

Published
April 1973
by
HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH ORGANIZATION
300 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

PREFATORY NOTE

This paper was presented by Dr. Kraemer at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association in New York, March 15-17, 1973.

The paper reports on the development of a cultural self-awareness exercise developed to improve instruction in intercultural communication skills. The work was performed for the Department of the Army by the Human Resources Research Organization Division No. 7 (Social Science), Alexandria, Virginia, under Work Unit COPE, Development of a Method for Training Military Personnel for Interaction With Foreign Nationals.

A Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Improving Intercultural Communication Skills

Alfred J. Kraemer

BACKGROUND

Much of the international work in which Americans are involved requires them to interact, on a fairly regular basis, with host nationals overseas, or with foreign officials and visitors in the United States. Some examples of this work are the kinds of jobs performed overseas by most technical advisors, foreign service personnel, teachers, and community development workers, or in the United States by advisors to foreign students. One requirement that is common to most of these activities is that the Americans be able to communicate with persons who have, in many cases, grown up in a cultural environment differing considerably from that prevailing in the United States.

Much has been written about the fact that cultural differences between people make it more difficult for them to communicate with each other (1). Numerous programs aimed at preparing Americans for this difficulty are in existence. The work to be described was an effort to develop an exercise that would improve the effectiveness of such programs, and that could readily be incorporated into them.

Working Hypotheses

When persons communicate with each other, or when they attempt to do so, each makes certain assumptions about the cognitions[1] of the other. They may make these assumptions knowingly or, more frequently, without awareness. Ease of communication between people is partially determined by the extent to which these assumptions are correct. When false assumptions about each other interfere with communication between individuals, they may perceive it immediately, or they may discover it later. Often they never become aware of it.

Probably the most common assumptions that persons in an encounter make about each other's cognitions are assumptions involving *projected cognitive similarity*—when they assume that the other person's cognitions are similar to what their own would be if they were in the other's place. Since cognitions are based largely on experience, the validity of assumptions of this type—and consequently ease of communication—should depend largely on the degree to which the persons' experiences are similar. Witness the ease with which identical twins communicate with each other, and the difficulties in communication experienced by persons who differ considerably in some important aspects of their experience, such as age, income, level of education, or the type of geographical environment to which they have become accustomed.

These kinds of differences, however, are often minimal in encounters between Americans and persons of other nationalities. It would be a rare occurrence to have an old Thai peasant and a young Wall Street banker trying to communicate with each other. More typical are encounters involving persons who are similar in age, education, and

[1]The term "cognition" is used here very broadly to refer to the processes of perceiving, recognizing, conceiving, judging, and reasoning (2), and to a person's values, assumptions, ideas, beliefs, and modes of thought (3).

occupation, and who differ primarily in their cultural background. In such cases, cultural differences can be expected to assume a much greater importance than the other factors in contributing to false assumptions involving projected cognitive similarity.

As Hartley and Hartley (4) have noted, the effects of cultural conditioning are sometimes so pervasive that people whose experience has been limited to the norms of their own culture simply cannot understand a communication based on a different set of norms. To this should be added that they also cannot understand why a "self-evident" communication from them cannot be comprehended by others.

An Illustration

The following example will illustrate the ideas presented so far. It is an excerpt from the diary kept by a young American computer engineer while he was the captain of the United States ping-pong team during its visit to China in 1971. He wrote:

> "I seemed to have some kind of a communications gap with many of the Chinese I met. I had a number of talks, for example, with our interpreter, but we sometimes had difficulty getting through to each other. He spoke excellent English, and I used very simple words, but he often apologized and said I should get a better interpreter because 'I just don't understand what you are saying.' I used words like 'individual' and 'unique'. They are words he knows, but he couldn't relate them to the idea of doing what you want to do. 'Do what I want to do?' one puzzled Chinese asked me. He looked terribly confused, as if to say: 'How do you do that?' I guess in China you have to do what the chairman tells you to do and then everything is cool and happy."[2]

Several things should be noted at once. The two persons in the encounter are of the same sex and are similar in age and level of education. The Chinese was a 26-year old university graduate and, being an interpreter, probably spoke English as well as almost any Chinese. It is not known what exact question asked by the American prompted the question "Do what I want to do?" However, the American recalls that the exchange occurred during a discussion of vocational choice and of whether or not one should always follow a leader's orders.[3]

Let us suppose that the American's question was something like, "But what do *you* want to do?" asked by him after hearing the Chinese describe his vocational interests in terms of how he might best serve the state. Note that the American had a ready-made explanation for the puzzlement of the Chinese: "I guess in China you have to do what the chairman tells you to do and then everything is cool and happy." This explanation seems to downgrade the intellectual level of the interpreter, as well as that of the Chinese people in general. He is, in the eyes of the American, a lesser person for not asserting his own individuality. The American's reaction does not suggest any doubt that his question had the same meaning for the interpreter as it did for him. For how could anyone speaking English that well not understand such a simple question? However, the apparently simple question "But what do *you* want to do?" implies certain assumptions by the American about the cognitions of the Chinese interpreter, namely, that the latter

[2] *Newsweek* magazine, April 26, 1971. By permission.

[3] Personal communication from Mr. Jack Howard, the American in the encounter.

understood and valued the idea of individual choice—assumptions likely to be unwarranted because individualism, as known in American society, is neither well understood nor valued among the Chinese.[4]

What should the American have done, once he had asked the question and observed the puzzlement of the Chinese? At the very least, suspend judgment. And had he recognized, upon reflection, the implicit assumption he had made, a suspension of judgment on his part would have been more likely. Probably no harm resulted from the failure in communication illustrated in this example since the American returned home after a few days. But had this been the beginning of a tour of duty, during which he would have met regularly with this Chinese, the early disparagement of the latter could have adversely affected future encounters between the two.

The Need for Cultural Self-Awareness

The existence of these kinds of difficulties in intercultural communication is generally recognized by designers of so-called "area training" programs. These programs are intended to prepare Americans for overseas assignments requiring interaction with host nationals. But the usual approach to such training is ethnocentric and too abstract; ethnocentric, because the focus is on the "foreign" culture and *its* "peculiar" characteristics; too abstract, because the culture is usually described at the anthropological or sociological level, rather than at the level of the individual.

The students may learn what the values of a society are, but not be able to recognize the influence of these values when they encounter the specific cognitions and behaviors of a host national. The same may be said about approaches based upon the idea that knowledge of one's own culture should make it easier to interact with members of another culture. Here again, one may know one's own culture in terms of abstractions and generalities, but not recognize their manifestations in one's cognitions and behavior. As Reisman has so aptly noted from his observations of Peace Corps Volunteers, "their real culture shock came at the discovery of how 'American' they were" in spite of their professed rejection of certain American values (5, p. 39).

Out of the foregoing considerations evolved the conviction that people's effectiveness in intercultural communication could be improved by developing their cultural self-awareness—that is, their ability to recognize cultural influences in their own cognitions. The development of this ability should have several beneficial results. It should enhance people's skill at diagnosing difficulties in intercultural communication. If they come away from an intercultural encounter with a feeling that communication was poor, they would be able to examine the conversation from the point of view of discovering what cultural elements in their own cognitions led them to make false assumptions about the cognitions of the other person.

Ordinarily one's reaction to not being able to communicate what seems to be a self-evident idea is to speculate on what shortcomings of the other person might explain the unexpected difficulty. This may be useful in one's own culture where false assumptions about another person's cognitions are more likely to have a psychological basis. In an intercultural situation, however, the search for psychological explanations can have unfortunate results—unless one is an expert on the host culture. The nonexpert is likely to come up with explanations that are not only not valid, but that falsely attribute deficiencies in character or intellect to the other person.

[4] This example was shown to about 150 Americans with some international experience. Many of them were certain that the Chinese understood the American only too well, and that he pretended to be puzzled because it was politically unsafe for him to speak his mind. Others, also certain that the Chinese understood the American's question, interpreted his puzzlement to mean "How could anyone possibly do what he wants to do under present conditions?"

At the very least, the ability should help make it easier to suspend judgment when one is confronted by behavior that appears odd. For the cultural elements in one's own cognitions will now be suspected of having caused one's perception of oddness in the behavior of the other person.

Some intercultural encounters are isolated occurrences, such as a meeting between a "good-will" hostess and a foreign visitor arriving at an airport. But the important ones are usually part of more or less continuous relationships which often last as long as the overseas tour of duty by the American, or the U.S. tour of a foreign national. Under such circumstances suspension of judgment and subsequent diagnosis are very useful, because the next meeting offers an opportunity to try to correct previous misunderstandings.

Another beneficial result should be greater awareness of one's ignorance of the other culture, and a corresponding increase in motivation to learn more about it. For example, as long as one assumes that a particular thought pattern is universal (under given circumstances), one has no reason to look for a cultural variation. Recognition of its cultural aspects should result in awareness that it may not be shared to the same extent in the other culture, and should arouse curiosity as to the nature of its variation there.

However, learning to recognize subtle manifestations of this variation among host nationals is something difficult to accomplish in stateside training—particularly if there are no nationals from the eventual host country in the program. The ideal place for learning about the host culture is *in* the host country. However, predeparture training of the kind to be described can be an effective preparation for in-country learning.

A case in point is the way Americans tend to think of themselves and others in connection with their occupations. That tendency could manifest itself in a question such as "What kind of work do you do?" that one American might ask another just after they have been introduced at a social gathering. That kind of question is a manifestation of the idea that people are primarily known by their work and their achievements—an idea not equally common in other cultures.

Having discovered in training how their way of thinking and talking about themselves is culturally influenced, Americans abroad would be more likely to pay close attention to the way host nationals think and talk about themselves. They might listen carefully to an exchange between host nationals who have just met for the first time. What might otherwise have been thought of as an insiginficant event is now recognized as an opportunity to learn. Thus, apart from its contribution to effectiveness in communication, the ability to recognize cultural aspects of one's own cognitions can serve as a stimulus and as a conceptual tool for learning the host culture.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXERCISE

Preliminary research was conducted in which video recordings were made of simulated intercultural encounters. These were role-playing encounters in which an American and a foreign actor pretended to meet in the context of a work situation in an imaginary foreign country. (The design of the encounters was a new version of an earlier model described by Stewart, Danielian, and Foster (6), which did not allow for universal values and, therefore, contained sharper but less plausible cultural contrasts.) The actor had been trained to play the role of a host national in such a way as to reflect cultural influences that were in plausible contrast to certain influences prevailing in American society.[5]

[5] Descriptions of these influences can be found in the writings of DuBois (7), Fuchs (8), and Williams (9), and in the collection of writings edited by McGiffert (10).

About 80 persons participated in this research. They were military officers, foreign service personnel, college students, and businessmen. The work situations were such that the participants could readily imagine actually being in them.

During playbacks of the recordings most role-players could recognize only the very obvious manifestations of cultural influences in themselves, in spite of the clues provided by the behavior of the actor. When their attention was drawn to less obvious manifestations by asking them to explain a given thought pattern, or a particular way of expressing it, the reasons given were almost invariably in terms of what they perceived to be the constraints of the situation (the imaginary one, as well as the role-playing situation), or in terms of their individual uniqueness ("I guess that's just the way I am, that's *me*").

The recordings were also shown to persons who were interested in the research, including fellow psychologists, and others concerned with improving training for overseas assignments. With rare exceptions, their ability to recognize cultural influences in the Americans' behavior did not seem much greater. Again, the focus was mostly on the individual characteristics of the role-player and on assumed situational constraints. As French has noted, "in certain contexts, all behavioral scientists know that we too 'have a culture.' Far less frequently is this culture made part of explanations of our own behavior. It is a function of the culture bondage we all share that we 'forget' our own culture, even after having become intellectually convinced of its existence." (11, p. 420).[6]

The difficulty in recognizing the influences of one's own culture does not seem to be caused mainly by lack of knowledge that there are certain influences that are not universal. (Reading a book on American culture would not help much.) Instead, the difficulty appears to result primarily from the fact that these influences manifest themselves only in combination with other influences, such as education, age, occupation, role, group membership, or situational constraints. In addition, most people rarely have any need or opportunity to learn to recognize the influences of their own culture, while learning to recognize the other influences is part of the socialization process.[7]

The observations made during the preliminary research led to certain considerations concerning the design of a learning experience that would develop one's cultural self-awareness. First, it seemed evident that it should be an experience in which one is confronted by behavior that could easily be one's own.[8] Second, the experience should be structured in such a way that one would learn to perceive cultural influences in spite of the presence of other influences. Third, it should involve the learners actively in the learning process. They should actually be practicing the analytic behavior required for the recognition of cultural influences.

These considerations led to the design of a small-group exercise in which participants are shown video recordings of staged segments of conversations between an American working overseas and a host national. The roles are played by actors, and the dialogue follows a script. The segments appear to be excerpts from recordings of spontaneous conversations, but only these excerpts were written and produced. Each shows at least one manifestation of a cultural influence in what the American is saying, or in the way it is said.

[6] Permission to reprint copyrighted material granted by McGraw-Hill Book Company.

[7] In behavioristic terms, learning to "recognize the influences of their own culture" refers to learning discriminative verbal responses to certain characteristics of Americans (including oneself). In the language of attribution theory, it refers to a change in one's perception of the causality attributed to these characteristics.

[8] Ideally, persons should be confronted by their own behavior. However, a technique that would accomplish this would be too expensive for most training programs.

The excerpts are grouped into sequences, with each sequence showing several different manifestations of a given cultural influence, while the other influences vary from excerpt to excerpt. Thus, in any one sequence, a cultural influence is a common element that is gradually brought into focus. Participants in the exercise view one excerpt at a time. After each one, they try to form a tentative hypothesis—in writing—as to the cultural influence (or influences) reflected in what the American is saying. They then discuss their hypotheses. Their task is to learn how to discover the common cultural element in each sequence. The instructor's function is to facilitate the learning process.[9]

Selection of Cultural Influences

No research could be conducted to determine empirically what aspects of American culture should be included in the exercise. That would have required an additional major project. Furthermore, no previous research suggested which aspects should be selected. For these reasons, the selection was arbitrary, but, there were several considerations that affected the final choice.

First, it seemed self-evident that well-known pervasive cultural values should be included, such as egalitarianism, individualism, and universalism. Second, it seemed appropriate to exclude certain cultural influences that might be considered less likely to come into play in the course of official duty overseas, such as those related to courtship, marriage, and sexual relations. Third, it seemed useful to include elements that are quite pervasive, although generally not recognized as cultural. In this category are aspects of decision-making processes. Fourth, it seemed useful to include concepts that come into play—almost by definition—in certain kinds of overseas jobs, such as the concept of self-help. Finally, aspects usually referred to as "customs and habits" were omitted. The fact that these are not universal is readily recognized by most educated persons.

It should be noted that it is not the purpose of the exercise to transmit knowledge of the existence of these aspects. In fact, it is assumed that participants who are not already aware of the existence of certain pervasive cultural elements in American society would benefit little from the exercise. It would be too difficult for them. (Unfortunately, they are unlikely to recognize this fact, because the manifest content of the excerpts is deceptively simple and therefore readily understandable to them.) Nor is the purpose to transmit knowledge of the selected manifestations of these aspects. They are but a minute sample of all the possibilities. The purpose of the exercise is to develop the participant's ability to recognize *a great variety* of manifestations of these cultural influences, not just the few that appear in the excerpts.

The following aspects of American culture were selected:

Individualism.

Egalitarianism.

Action orientation.

Perception of interpersonal encounters primarily in terms of their utility.

Downgrading of the social significance of such encounters.

The belief that the application of a rule, regulation, or law should not be influenced by the nature of the relationship between the person applying it and the person to whom it is applied.

Definition of persons (including oneself) in terms of their work and achievements.

[9] A detailed description of the procedure to be followed during the exercise will be contained in an instructor's handbook now in preparation.

The belief that the people to be affected by a decision should have a voice in the decision-making process.

The preference for a mode of decision making that involves evaluation of the consequences of alternative courses of action.

The belief that competition is a good way of motivating people.

The belief that there must be differences in "goodness" between various ways of doing something, that these differences can be determined, that a choice can and should be made on the basis of such differences, and that the chosen alternative can be implemented.

The belief that knowledge gained through observation is superior to knowledge gained in other ways.

Unnecessary quantification.

Placing a higher value on the utility of things than on their aesthetic aspects.

Problem orientation.

The belief that thoughts cannot influence events.

Reasoning in terms of probability.

Impatience.

The tendency to make comparative judgments.

The willingness to offer one's services for the benefit of "the common good."

The belief in the existence of a behavior pattern called "self-help."

The use of absurd suppositions to elicit ideas from other persons.

The order in which these aspects are listed here is not the order in which they are shown in the exercise.[10] The order was changed so that readers who might view the recordings could still have at least some of the experience they would have as participants in the exercise. Actually, some loss of that experience results from the mere knowledge of the contents of the list, which participants do not have. For them the task is somewhat like solving a crossword puzzle. Knowing the contents of the list in the proper order would make the experience of viewing the recordings like looking at a puzzle that has already been solved. Of course, participants need not use the same labeling or phrasing that appears in the list. Their own way of expressing the idea is sufficient—perhaps better. Some will have difficulty in expressing their discovery of a cultural influence in any kind of coherent statement.

No attempt was made to select mutually exclusive cultural aspects of American society. To do so would have resulted in a very short list of aspects at a very high level of abstraction, such as the five value orientations described by Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (12). An effort was made to select aspects across the entire range of level of abstraction. As a result, while the term "manifestation" has been used to refer to a particular way in which an aspect might manifest itself (as shown in an excerpt), some of the aspects may themselves be thought of as manifestations of a higher order aspect, that is, one that is conceptualized at a higher level of abstraction.[11]

The selection of these aspects of American culture for the exercise does not, of course, imply that they are present only in American society, or that they influence all

[10] No research was done to determine what relationship might exist between the order of presentation and the effectiveness of the exercise.

[11] This may be an unpardonable sin to the serious student of culture, but it seems to be of no consequence as far as the purpose of the exercise is concerned.

Americans to the same degree. It is assumed, however, that their variability within American society is smaller than their variability among the nations of the world.[12]

Empirical evidence for this assumption is not available for each aspect on the list. Research that would support or refute it has not been conducted in each case. However, the author takes the view that the burden of proof is on those who assert that a given aspect is universal. In the absence of empirical evidence, and when no logical argument can be made for universality, the assumption of cultural variation seems to be the better working hypothesis.

For persons participating in the exercise, the question of proof should be irrelevant. Much more difficulty in communication can be expected to result from false assumptions of universality than from false assumptions of cultural variation. With respect to the question of variation *within* American society, some participants in the exercise may well feel that a particular aspect manifests itself only rarely in their own cognitions. If so, they can simply follow the dictum "If the shoe doesn't fit, don't wear it!"

Construction of Dialogue Excerpts

The following requirements influenced the writing of the excerpts:

(1) The excerpts should give the impression of having been taken from ongoing conversations.

(2) These conversations should involve Americans of various occupations who are working overseas. (The military, the Foreign Service, the Peace Corps, and the oil business were selected.)

(3) The manifest content of the excerpts should make sense to the audience without connecting narrative.

(4) The manifest content should be plausible.

(5) The utterances of the host national should provide clues (i.e., indications of contrasting cultural influences) that would help the participant discover cultural influences in the Americans' cognitions. (The requirement for plausibility prevented this from being done in all cases.)

(6) There should be a clue-providing utterance by the host national at or near the end of the excerpt. This would make it possible to vary the level of difficulty of the exercise by either including or excluding these utterances. (Again, the requirement for plausibility prevented this from being done in all cases.)

(7) There should be a sufficient amount of manifest content in each excerpt to serve as a distracting element, as would often be the case in real-life dialogue.

(8) In each sequence, the behavior of the Americans should show a variety of manifestations of the same cultural influence.

It did not seem desirable, and it would in fact have been very difficult, to have each excerpt contain a manifestation of only one cultural influence. To attempt to do so would have caused each excerpt to be so brief, that in most cases the manifest content would not have made sense without introductory narrative. The reason for this difficulty is that a single cognition often contains more than one cultural element.[13] Consequently, some excerpts could have been placed in a sequence other than the one in which they appear.

The following excerpt illustrates how the requirements just listed influenced its construction. The context is a conversation between a Lieutenant Colonel Konda, the

[12] The statistical definition of "cultural influence" implied by this statement was found to be more readily comprehensible to participants in the exercise than various anthropological definitions of culture.

[13] A similar difficulty was experienced by Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (12) in the construction of items for their value orientation schedule.

Deputy Director of Instruction at the host-country military academy, and a Major Smith who serves as an advisor at the academy.

Smith: No, no thank you, sir. I think I'd better be getting back to my office.

Konda: Yes, this has been a good meeting, Major Smith.

Smith: Yes, sir, it has. I think we've had a very good discussion. I understand your situation much better now. Your explanations were every helpful.

Konda: Yes, yes, a good meeting. We had a good talk, yes. We like your ideas, yes. You must visit again.

Smith: Well, sir, I'm always glad to be of some help. Perhaps we could get together when I receive the materials from West Point. I could bring them over and show them to you.][14]

Konda: Ah, Major Smith, why wait for the materials?

The first two lines[15] tell the audience that the excerpt is taken from the final part of the conversation. The next two lines contain distracting elements. Smith's last line reflects a cultural influence that is common to all excerpts in the sequence, namely, the downgrading of the social significance of interpersonal encounters. The key sentence is "Perhaps we could get together when I receive the materials from West Point." It reflects Smith's idea of making his next encounter with Konda contingent upon the existence of a work-related reason for getting together. He implies that he does not see much value in getting together without such a reason. Konda's last line provides a clue without which the discovery of the cultural influence becomes much more difficult. If this excerpt is shown first in the sequence, viewers can, of course, form only a tentative hypothesis as to the common cultural influence that they will be trying to discover in the sequence.

The following is another example from the same sequence. The context is a conversation between a Mr. Konda who is in charge of the provincial office of the Ministry of Education, and a Mr. Smith, an American oil company executive, who will be in charge of the training center at a new refinery being constructed by the company near the provincial capital. Smith is concerned about getting applicants for the training program who have a minimum level of education. He meets with Konda to discuss this.

Konda: Yes. Next time you come, we can do that.

Smith: Well, this has been a very useful meeting.

Konda: Yes, yes, we are happy that you could be with us. And now, before you go, Mr. Smith, you must meet the other men in my department. They know about your oil company building this new refinery, yes, yes. I will go with you and you will meet them.

Smith: Well, thank you. That's very kind of you. I hope it won't be too much trouble.]

Konda: Trouble?

Smith: I mean, I don't want to take up too much of your time.

Some of the excerpts are considerably more difficult than these two examples. A higher level of difficulty is illustrated in the following excerpt from another sequence. The sequence is relatively easy since the cultural influence is well known. The context is the same as that of the last example.

Smith: But we want to be sure that only the best qualified men get hired.

Konda: Yes, you must have good men, of course.

Smith: Yes, that's why we have to have the interviews and the tests.

Konda: I see. And how will you know which are the good men?

[14]The bracket in this and the following examples indicates where the playing of the dialogue would be stopped to increase the difficulty of the excerpt.

[15]"Line" refers to everything said by one actor without interruption.

Smith: Well, we'll interview only those who do well on the tests, of course.]
Konda: I see. But how can a man do well in the test when you have not yet hired him?

The video recordings contain 138 excerpts. Most of the 21 sequences contain seven excerpts each. The average length of the excerpts is less than a minute. The difficulty of the exercise may be increased not only by omitting clue lines, but also by omitting the easiest excerpts in each sequence.

Summary of Trial Administrations

At successive stages during the development of the exercise, portions of the recorded material were used in small-group settings with about 300 military officers, foreign service personnel, and businessmen. This was done to (a) determine the feasibility of the approach, (b) discover flaws in the excerpts that had to be corrected, (c) develop the instructional procedure, (d) determine the appropriate level of difficulty, and (e) experiment with various techniques of overcoming resistance to the learning experience. The following is a summary of what was learned during these trials.[16]

Plausibility. In spite of the fact that the video recordings show staged performances, most viewers perceived the dialogue as natural and spontaneous rather than theatrical. Some of the groups were not told until after the exercise that the performances had been staged. Instead they were led to believe they would see excerpts from spontaneous conversations that had occurred during role-playing encounters. At the completion of the exercise almost all the participants in these groups thought what they had seen was unrehearsed. Only a few were not sure. This is important because participants are more likely to accept the performances as plausible if they do not seem staged—even when they know that they are.

Group Homogeneity. An important requirement for the conduct of the exercise is that the participants' existing level of cultural self-awareness be similar. A great disparity makes it impossible to find an appropriate level of difficulty for them. Participants for whom the level is too low have too little opportunity to learn, others for whom it is too high may get frustrated and aggressive. Unfortunately cultural self-awareness does not seem to be related to the criteria according to which persons are grouped together in programs of instruction for Americans going overseas. It thus becomes necessary to make up new groups to conduct the exercise successfully. The cultural self-awareness test developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the exercise could be used for this purpose.

Prerequisites. The exercise is intended for use with persons who have certain minimum levels of intellectual ability and social science education. Just what these minimum levels are remains to be determined. Unlike students who have mistakenly entered a calculus class when they should be in a beginning algebra course, participants in the exercise may not realize for some time that they are out of place. This can happen because the manifest content of the excerpts is readily understandable to everyone who might be a participant.

Resistance to the Learning Experience. Negative reactions by at least one member of the group, usually in the form of irrelevant criticisms, are not uncommon. There may be participants who consider themselves quite sensitive to cultural differences but who, contrary to their expectation, find the exercise more difficult than most other persons in the group. This uncomfortable experience can result in disruptive behavior on their part. They may vehemently question the plausibility of the manifest content of some excerpts, or they may insist that the common cultural aspect of the Americans' behavior in a given

[16] A complete account, including recommended procedures and techniques, and a detailed description of the cultural aspects of each excerpt, will be published in the instructor's handbook now in preparation.

sequence is universal. Some participants may react negatively because they cannot accept the fact that their own ideas and behavior are subject to influences over which they have no control. That reaction itself is undoubtedly determined, at least in part, by cultural influences.

Duration. The exercise, when properly conducted, lasts about two days. Usually only four or five excerpts per sequence should be used. The preparation of a group of instructors for conducting the exercise takes about three days, assuming they have a social science background, intercultural experience, and know how to conduct small-group instruction.

Evaluation of Exercise

Does participation in the exercise actually increase one's cultural self-awareness? This question could not readily be answered because no instrument for measuring cultural self-awareness was in existence. Such an instrument was therefore developed. It is a paper-and-pencil test in which respondents have to identify subtle manifestations of cultural influences, which they presumably share. They are shown a series of statements each of which gives them four items of information about a person (or persons) whose nationality they do not know. They are asked to indicate which of the four seems the best available clue that the person(s) could be American. The following are two such statements from the test.

> A man and his eight-year old son have just been seated at a table in a restaurant.
>
> (a) The father starts to read the menu he was handed and notices the prices.
> (b) The son wonders why he did not get a menu also.
> (c) Later, the father motions to the waiter to come and take the order.
> (d) As the father gives the order, he points to the places on the menu where the food he is ordering is listed.
>
> An engineer serving as a consultant is asked for his opinion of a new model pump being considered for use in an irrigation project. He replies:
>
> (a) "Many good things have been said about this pump.
> (b) And the literature on it indicates that the design is excellent.
> (c) Its manufacturer has a good reputation.
> (d) But I have not actually seen it in operation."

Research is under way to determine the validity of the test. An experimental administration of the exercise will be conducted using the test as a criterion measure.

Participation in the exercise is unlikely to have a noticeable long-range effect on the behavior of the participants, if they do not practice what they have learned. Fortunately, the opportunities for practice are unlimited—even if the participants never leave the United States. For they are surrounded, particularly in their respective organizations, by a rich array of subtle manifestations of their own culture. The mass media, of course, provide another excellent source. In any case, they can always practice on themselves.

LITERATURE CITED

1. Brein, Michael and David, Kenneth H. "Intercultural Communication and the Adjustment of the Sojourner," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 76, 1971, pp. 215-230.
2. English, Horace B. and English, Ava C. *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological Terms*, Longmans, Green, New York, 1958.
3. Krech, David, Crutchfield, Richard S., and Ballachey, Egerton L. *Individual in Society*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1962.
4. Hartley, Eugene L. and Hartley, Ruth E. *Fundamentals of Social Psychology*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1955.
5. Riesman, David. "Some Questions About the Study of American Character in the Twentieth Century," *The Annals*, vol. 370, March 1967, pp. 36-47.
6. Stewart, Edward C., Danielian, Jack, and Foster, Robert J. *Simulating Intercultural Communication Through Role-Playing*, HumRRO Technical Report 69-7, May 1969.
7. DuBois, Cora. "The Dominant Value Profile of American Culture," *American Anthropologist*, vol. 57, 1955, pp. 1232-1239.
8. Fuchs, Lawrence H. *Those Peculiar Americans*, Meredith Press. New York, 1967.
9. Williams, Robin M. *American Society*, (2nd ed.) Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1961.
10. McGiffert, Michael (ed.). *The Character of Americans* (rev. ed.), Dorsey Press, Homewood, Illinois, 1970.
11. French, David. "The Relationship of Anthropology to Studies in Perception and Cognition," in *Psychology: A Study of a Science. Vol. 6. Investigations of Man as Socious: Their Place in Psychology and the Social Sciences*, Sigmund Koch (ed.), McGraw-Hill, 1963, pp. 388-428.
12. Kluckhohn, Florence R. and Strodbeck, Fred L. *Variations in Value Orientations*, Row, Peterson, Evanston, Illinois, 1961.

Unclassified

Security Classification

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY *(Corporate author)* Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) 300 North Washington Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314	2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified 2b. GROUP

3. REPORT TITLE

A CULTURAL SELF-AWARENESS APPROACH TO IMPROVING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES *(Type of report and inclusive dates)*

Professional Paper

5. AUTHOR(S) *(First name, middle initial, last name)*

Alfred J. Kraemer

6. REPORT DATE	7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES	7b. NO. OF REFS
April 1973	16	12

8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO.	9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
DAHC-19-73-C-0004 b. PROJECT NO. 2Q062107A745 c. d.	HumRRO-PP-5-73 9b. OTHER REPORT NO.(S) *(Any other numbers that may be assigned this report)*

10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES	12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY
Presented at Annual Meeting, International Studies Association, New York, March 1973. HumRRO Division No. 7 (Social Science), Alexandria, Virginia	Office, Chief of Research and Development Department of the Army Washington, D.C. 20310

13. ABSTRACT

Communication between persons of differing cultural backgrounds can be hindered by culturally-conditioned assumptions that they make about each other's cognitions. An exercise was designed to reduce this effect through increased cultural self-awareness. It involves participants in analyzing video recordings of staged "excerpts" from intercultural dialogues that contain subtle manifestations of cultural influences present in American society. The participants learn how to recognize such manifestations. This difficult process is facilitated by grouping the excerpts into sequences, and having each sequence show several manifestations of the same cultural influence, while noncultural influences are being varied from excerpt to excerpt. In each sequence the cultural influence is a common element gradually brought into focus.

DD FORM 1 NOV 65 1473

Unclassified

Security Classification

14. KEY WORDS	LINK A		LINK B		LINK C	
	ROLE	WT	ROLE	WT	ROLE	WT
Cultural self-awareness						
Intercultural communication						
Intercultural encounters						